Disaster Care for 15 Million Californians

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THE California Disaster Office has long been appreciative of the fact that the medical profession, busy though it is with its urgent daily business, has found time to become a bulwark of our state's program of nonmilitary defense.

No profession has contributed more time to public service, nor responded more willingly and effectively to government's appeal for cooperation in survival planning.

I will touch upon three complex and vital phases of the involved question of disaster care for the third largest state in the United States. First, I will outline the need for disaster planning in a broad sense. Second, I will summarize what the California Disaster Office has done about this challenge, up to now. And third, I will describe my own particular prognosis for the future of the program—something that can be achieved only with your continued, and superlatively effective, cooperation.

Quite apart from the merits of nonmilitary defense, its proponents are forced to spend a large part of their time seeking greater public acceptance and justifying their existence generally. This can be a vexing proposition. At times when I have entered my office in the morning I have felt like the physician who greeted one of his most persistent patients, a tireless hypochrondriac, with the question: "Well, Mrs. Adams, what do you think is the matter with you this morning?" And she replied:

"Doctor, I hardly know. What's new?"

Our problems have often seemed to turn up with the same unfailing regularity. Often we find that the answers for the doubting Thomases are not easily produced. For my own part, I have occasionally felt sympathetic about the medical student whose instructor had just exhibited a diagram and said:

"The subject here limps because one leg is shorter than the other."

The instructor then asked the student: "Now, Mr. Sneed, what would you do in such a case?"

The student pondered earnestly. Finally he replied with conviction:

"I have an idea, sir, that I should limp, too."

Now, those who have been engaged in nonmilitary defense over a period of years are familiar with the fact that it is an absolutely essential component of our structure of state government, and of our total national defense. We recognize that we still must win over the skeptics so that we can accomplish our objective of protecting the whole and growing population of California.

Nonmilitary defense as we know it today came into being several years after the close of World War II. Since the detonation of the first nuclear weapons—an event which brought the potential of war to the doorstep of every American—the need for the program has steadily heightened.

We of Civil Defense have witnessed the horrors of test nuclear explosions. We have seen the potential for destruction so vast and so terrifying as to numb the senses. We know the death-dealing swath that radioactive fallout can cut through our civilian population, unless adequate precautionary measures are taken. We know how completely our everyday life would be disrupted in the event of nuclear war.

Just as certainly do we know that man can survive these horrors—but only if he is prepared. Preparedness starts in the home—in every American home. To survive as a nation, our people must first be prepared to survive for themselves.

• The urgency of the crisis following a nuclear attack staggers the imagination. We would have thousands or millions of survivors making a desperate struggle to survive. Safe water supplies and waste-disposal systems would be gone. In some areas, there would be little or no food or shelter.

Yet California has already manned a medical arsenal that is second to none in the United States. We have stored 115 emergency hospitals at strategic points, and through the county medical associations we have appointed cadres including physicians, nurses and technicians. Plans have been made for workers who will assist in setting up the hospitals and first aid stations.

In our future operations we will continue to place strong emphasis on the medical phase of our program of disaster care.

The program would be just as essential in the event of major natural disaster as nuclear war.

Our objective is a simple one. We are seeking to preserve the human resources which are necessary for recovery.

California's medical profession, with the allied professions of nursing and technical skills, has a vital interest in continuing operations to the maximum extent even under the most trying conditions.

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Until his resignation, July 1, 1960, the author was Director, State of California Disaster Office.

Thus, in essence, the deterrent strength of America lies in the preparedness of its people. The civilian population must realize that we cannot rely in this thermonuclear age on military protection alone. The role of the military in the total defense of the United States is to meet and defeat the enemy. Our only logical conclusion today is that military assistance can complement—but it cannot substitute for—civilian participation in Civil Defense.

At the same time, a state with the topographical, geographical and sociological complexity of California must have a positive, working program of protection against natural disasters.

That is the reason for the existence of the California Disaster Office.

I would like to give you a thumbnail description of some of the work that has been done by the California Disaster Office—a record of which every Californian has reason to be proud. This is not a self-serving statement. The accomplishments could not have been made without the dedicated leadership and assistance of such top-level professional groups as the California Medical Association.

On that subject, I am sure that you are aware that the state's program of disaster care has been called the most progressive in the nation. I have that word from the very able chairman of our Emergency Medical Advisory Committee, Dr. Justin J. Stein. And I have on my own cognizance a personal knowledge of the outstanding work being done by the respected Chief of our Medical and Health Division, Dr. Frank Cole; his dynamic assistant, Dr. Cecil Coggins; and their effective staff.

Thanks to them, and to you, California leads the nation in its program of disaster care. Already, we have stockpiled more than $4 million in medical equipment and well over $1 million in radiological equipment, throughout California.

Thanks to them, and to you, the majority of the 17,000 members of the California Medical Association have a definite assignment in the event of a disaster.

Thanks to them, and to you, medical staffs all over the state have been trained in the operation and use of our 115 emergency hospitals, hundreds of thousands of blood procurement sets, 50 sanitation units and 680 first aid stations.

Since you are thoroughly familiar with the medical program, let me just mention a few of the other areas in which the program of the California Disaster Office has stored the hardware and trained the bodies in its operation.

Our Division of Public Safety has contributed immeasurably to the Fire Service's system of mutual aid. Seeing the need for improved fire communications in our sprawling state, the Division designed and is having built fire communications units which receive full support from the local fire agencies. Local departments are enthusiastic about the 100 state-owned pumpers which we have placed in their custody.

In addition to its other pioneering accomplishments, our Radiological Defense Division has trained 22,000 Californians in monitoring—far and away the largest number trained by any state.

Our Emergency Operations and Programming Division is in large measure responsible for California's first complete Civil Defense Operations Plan, now being used by the Federal Government as a model for other states. The plan was published in March of last year. Since that time, more than 20 state agencies have completed or are close to completing integrated disaster plans. Hundreds of local government agencies are engaged in the same task—with some of the integrated local plans already completed.

Our Equipment and Federal Assistance Division has made it possible during the last eight years for state and local agencies to receive $13.2 million in matching funds in order to improve their nonmilitary defense capability. By the same token, the state, the counties and cities since 1956 have purchased surplus property worth $18.5 million at a cost of $1.1 million.

Our Emergency Communications and Warning Division has made accomplishments of national stature in the development of Conelrad, the emergency broadcasting system required by the Federal Government. It has set up an efficient warning system as part of the total defense pattern. And it has developed and built a mobile communications system of complex nature which is deemed by some experts to be the best of its kind in the United States.

I have already mentioned the medical hardware—the equipment which we have acquired from the Federal Government (chiefly at its expense) and placed in the custody of local agencies. A moment ago I referred to our emergency communications units and the state's 100 fire pumpers. This protective arsenal also includes 29 rescue trucks, 105 radiological monitor trailers, 16 mobile radiological laboratories, more than 10,000 radiological instruments, 265 bell and lights receivers in our warning system—and more. I mention these items to give you some idea of the way in which the Disaster Office spends its time.

In this phase of our work, then, we can point to a degree of success. In the broader phases, however, you know and I know that we have just begun.

The question of public acceptance of nonmilitary defense is one of our thorniest problems. It is one that we will grapple with until we have overcome it.

Much has been done in California to lick the problem. The governor has given us outstanding leadership. He has traveled to Puerto Rico and to Chicago serving as a member of the Governors' Committee on Civil Defense, of which New York's Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller is the chairman. He has reactivated our advisory committees, and personally has instructed them to lend us their full assistance.

In addition, we have formed a committee of publishers and broadcasters which lends us wholehearted cooperation. We have accelerated the flow of news releases and scripts, and have prepared new exhibits which have been well received. Yet praiseworthy as this effort is, we are the first to recognize that it is not enough.

Still to be achieved is public recognition that in today's world there are reasons for having a program of Civil Defense.

We are not warmongers. Unequivocally and totally we reject the accusation that Civil Defense helps to set the climate for war, or that it is any more an invitation to nuclear disaster than your automobile insurance policy is an invitation to an accident.

The people of the United States share with the people of other nations the dream of a lasting peace. We have gone so far as to base our $40 billion annual budget for military defense on purely retaliatory concepts. In other words, we have accepted the premise that the first blow will be taken by the United States.

Gone is the day when we could rely on oceans and allies as shields to enemy attack. The modern aircraft and guided missile, reaching out hundreds and thousands of miles, have crushed this shield. If the United States should be attacked, there would follow a struggle for survival—both civil and military—of the grimmest nature. This struggle would be unparalleled in history. It would demand all our strength and all our resources if we hoped to survive the initial attack and strike back.

Under those circumstances, we are left with two major reasons for the existence of a vigorous program of nonmilitary defense. We need to exert the deterrent power upon the enemy. And, should those efforts fail, we must be prepared to pick up the pieces and rebuild.

It would accomplish little, for example, to save people from the direct or fallout effects of nuclear weapons if they were subsequently to starve or die for lack of medical attention.

At this point in history, no man can estimate how imminent the nuclear holocaust may be. Strong criticism of our defense policies has been voiced by some who believe we are falling behind in the race of armaments. I have no intention of dealing with that question in these remarks, beyond stating my own conviction that a nation's strength must be measured in terms of economic and educational goals, as well as its arsenal of warheads.

The success or failure of our international policy does depend in a very critical measure, however, upon our own attitude toward preparedness of civilians and civilian agencies for dealing with unprecedented nuclear disaster. For that reason I have grown increasingly impressed, of late, with the homely statement that when Noah built the ark, it wasn't raining.

In our search for a peace formula that will adapt to our perilous times, we must be realistic no matter how distasteful or unglamorous the task appears. Our tasks in Civil Defense are not glamorous. You have my word for it that they are often unrewarding. Many people claim that we are playing games for eventualities that may never materialize. Thus, they argue, we are wasting time and money. I hope they are right—for I firmly believe the alternative could be total destruction.

What we are doing is buying insurance to take care of an attack involving advance planning as the prime means of survival. I often observe the firemen in my neighborhood, sitting around waiting for a fire that may never happen. This does not disturb me. I am happy in the knowledge that vigilance and preparedness are waiting to put out the fire of war that we devoutly hope will never come.

Basic to a just understanding of the need for Civil Defense is one glaring fact: We are not setting up a corps of men in arm bands who will spring to our defense and protection when the siren sounds. Instead, we are using the time, blessedly given to us—this period in the cool gray of the morning, pre-attack—to build in to our existing agencies—fire, law enforcement, medical and so on—the ability to take care of citizens in a terrible situation for which there are no guide lines in all the history books on all the library shelves.

We need your continued staunch support. Make no mistake about it—you are among our most valued allies, for you have already acquired the professional training and the skills. Under disaster conditions you would continue your day-to-day discharge of Hippocratic principles. But you would be working under the most challenging and trying circumstances in helping to alleviate suffering and rebuild our nation.

The urgency of the crisis following a nuclear attack staggers the imagination. We would have thousands or millions of survivors making a desperate struggle to survive. Safe water supplies and waste-disposal systems would be gone. In some areas, there would be little or no food or shelter.

Only with the assistance of trained professional men and women, including in a very important

sense the men and women of the California Medical Association, could we even hope to spring back.

California's medical profession has its own vital interest in continuing operations to the maximum extent, even under the most trying conditions. You would be playing an essential part in all operations designed to help our state survive, recover and return to the way of life in which we believe so devoutly.

Our program for the future must include all actions which would make it possible for us to assist and care for the survivors of an attack or disaster; preserve civil government as we know it, and want to keep it; make maximum effective use of the remaining material resources; and merge the manpower and resources left to us, under the leadership of civil government, into an effective attempt to achieve our national objectives.

It is reasonable and logical that nonmilitary defense should continue to be your working partners. You are laboring unceasingly to eradicate disease. We are laboring to achieve a prepared public and governmental structure. As you reduce the prevalence of the killers, you mark new progress for mankind. As we succeed in dispelling public indifference to the need for a survival program, we add to the strength of our state and nation.

In that sense, we hope one day to share with the medical profession the incomparable accolade given to you by Lord Bryce: "Medicine is the only profession that labors incessantly to destroy the reason for its own existence."

In closing, may I sum up as follows:

If a citizen demands wise government, he must recognize that wise government is the product of an intelligent citizenry and nothing else.

If a citizen demands that his country protect him, he must cooperate unselfishly in giving his time and money to maintain the institutions which afford that protection.

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What the Surgeon Ought to Be

The conditions necessary for the surgeon are four: first, he should be learned; second, he should be expert; third, he must be ingenious; and fourth, he should be able to adapt himself. It is required for the first that the surgeon should know not only the principles of surgery, but also those of medicine in theory and practice; for the second, that he should have seen others operate; for the third, that he should be ingenious, of good judgment and memory to recognize conditions; and for the fourth, that he be adaptable and able to accommodate himself to circumstances. Let the surgeon be bold in all sure things; let him avoid all faulty treatments and practices. He ought to be gracious to the sick, considerate to his associates, cautious in his prognostications. Let him be modest, dignified, gentle, pitiful, and merciful; not covetous nor an extortionist of money; but rather let his reward be according to his work, to the means of the patient, to the quality of the issue, and to his own dignity.

—Introduction to the General Chapter, Ars Chirurgica, 1363; first printed edition at Lyon, 1478; first English edition, 1541; GUY DE CHAULIAC (c. 1300-68).

Submitted by ALBERT FIELDS, M.D.